

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
OFFICE OF MARINE SAFETY

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INTERVIEW

RE:

FISHING VESSEL TAKI-TOOO

?-----+  
IN THE MATTER OF:  
INTERVIEW OF  
JOHN BROWN  
CAPTAIN OF F/V KERRI LIN  
?-----+

MONDAY

February 9, 2004

The above-entitled interview was conducted at  
10:12 a.m.

BEFORE: ROB JONES, Nat'l Transportation Safety  
Board

(Transcript produced from audio CD provided by the  
National Transportation Safety Board.)

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P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

10:12

a.m.

MR. JONES: Okay. This is just a follow-up interview with Mr. John Brown?

MR. BROWN: Yes, John Brown. John Brown's body. You bet.

MR. JONES: Okay. And you were skipper of the Kerri Lin?

MR. BROWN: Right.

MR. JONES: And just a follow-on interview was just that you did not take the Kerri Lin out that day because of the forecast and you have a guideline of your own that you don't take your boat out if the swells or seas are double digits?

MR. BROWN: Right.

MR. JONES: If that's accurate?

MR. BROWN: That's accurate.

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1 MR. JONES: Okay. And just, by the  
2 way,  
3 today is February 9th, 2004.

4 MR. BROWN: Okay.

5 MR. JONES: Now, what I was reading,  
6 Mr.

7 Brown, was you were out on the jetties that morning  
8 because you didn't take the boat out?

9 MR. BROWN: No, actually what it is is  
10 that every morning when -- before I go to fish, I  
11 take  
12 the -- I -- I drive out to the jetty. Okay?

13 MR. JONES: Right.

14 MR. BROWN: I mean, you're from -- we  
15 live  
16 in Rockaway and our business is in Garibaldi.

17 MR. JONES: Right.

18 MR. BROWN: And so it's right on my  
19 way,  
20 so I just -- I just pull out there every morning  
21 and  
22 check to see what the bar looks like. And every  
23 morning I meet with my deck hands and usually some  
24 other skippers are out there also, especially if we  
25 --

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1 if we have a forecast of a -- of a big ocean.

2 MR. JONES: Right.

3 MR. BROWN: Okay? And so I -- I

4 stopped

5 at the -- the jetty and looked at it and talked it

6 over with my crew. Matter of fact, I -- I had two

7 deck hands that -- that day and I had a -- I had a

8 full boat. Well, I had 12 people. And they're

9 people

10 that I've had before. They were return customers.

11 And I just went to the office and I -- I told them

12 that it looked like they could go play golf or --

13 or

14 do something else that morning because we felt they

15 weren't going to be going.

16 MR. JONES: Right.

17 MR. BROWN: So we refunded their money

18 and

19 -- and sent -- sent them on their way. And then we

20 went over to the restaurant across the street and

21 were

22 having breakfast. Okay? And while we were having

23 breakfast there, the other skipper that's out of

24 our

25 -- out of our building. It's the CEG skipper, Joe

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1 Openfeld (phonetic sp.). He had his radio on. He  
2 has  
3 a VHF radio. And it was sitting on the table and  
4 we  
5 were listening to it because we knew that we had  
6 three  
7 or four boats that were out there at the end of the  
8 jetty trying to go across. So we -- we were  
9 listening  
10 to that.

11 Okay. Next question?

12 MR. JONES: Okay. Well, just when the  
13 Taki-Tooo capsized, just your placement. You were  
14 out  
15 on the jetty at that time though?

16 MR. BROWN: Yes, I was.

17 MR. JONES: Okay. So you witnessed it?

18 MR. BROWN: Oh, yes, I witnessed it.

19 MR. JONES: Okay. And the one thing I  
20 have from your transcript is you estimated the  
21 Taki-  
22 Tooo rounded the jetty about 50 to 100 yards off  
23 the  
24 north jetty.

25 MR. BROWN: Right.

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1                   MR. JONES: Okay. And then I was just  
2 wondering at that point when it came a little  
3 further  
4 to the north and, you know, it got the roller, you  
5 know, on the beam there broadsided.

6                   MR. BROWN: Yes.

7                   MR. JONES: And it capsized. Was it  
8 still  
9 -- do you have an estimate of how far it was off  
10 the  
11 jetties when it capsized?

12                  MR. BROWN: I -- I can tell you about  
13 how  
14 far north it was.

15                  MR. JONES: Yes.

16                  MR. BROWN: But I can't -- I -- I -- my  
17 perspective from where I was standing, it almost  
18 makes  
19 it impossible to tell how far he was from the end  
20 of  
21 the jetty, as far as east and west.

22                  MR. JONES: Right.

23                  MR. BROWN: Okay? But he was probably  
24 --  
25 oh, maybe three-quarters of a football field, maybe

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1 75

2 yards.

3 MR. JONES: Okay.

4 MR. BROWN: You know? Somewhere -- I  
5 mean, you know, I -- I'm standing clear back almost  
6 to  
7 the tower. Okay?

8 MR. JONES: Right.

9 MR. BROWN: On some sand bags there and  
10 I'm standing with the -- with the father, well,  
11 with  
12 Mick Buell.

13 MR. JONES: Right.

14 MR. BROWN: Okay. With Tammy's dad.  
15 Okay? And proceed going hit sideways and it looks  
16 like it's almost dead in the water and then all of  
17 a  
18 sudden one had rolled underneath it and then it --  
19 it  
20 almost looked like the next wave just kind of  
21 sucked  
22 it up and rolled it over, you know? It's just --  
23 you're on the bottom side of -- of that swell and  
24 it  
25 just grabbed him and just rolled him over and I

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1       just  
2       hollered at Mick. I said, "They're over. They're  
3       over." Anyway, and he started running up the jetty  
4       at  
5       that time towards -- up the jetty where he would be  
6       of  
7       no help at all and he was just hollering, "Tammy.  
8       Tammy. Tammy." And I -- I got on the telephone  
9       and  
10      I called my wife who was on her way home in another  
11      car and then I called my son who was already home  
12      in  
13      Rockaway and then I called 9-1-1.

14                   MR. JONES: Well, you have a good  
15      memory.  
16      It's almost been a year and that's almost verbatim  
17      from your --

18                   MR. BROWN: Well, you know, it's --  
19      it's  
20      kind of like when the Twin Towers went down.

21                   MR. JONES: Yes, and I remember you  
22      referenced that too.

23                   MR. BROWN: Do you know where you were?

24                   MR. JONES: Absolutely.

25                   MR. BROWN: See, and I do too.

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1 MR. JONES: Yes, it's not something  
2 you're  
3 going to forget.

4 MR. BROWN: Right. It's -- it's one of  
5 those things that -- that is in your memory and you  
6 just don't forget things like that, so --

7 MR. JONES: Yes.

8 MR. BROWN: Anything else?

9 MR. JONES: Well, just to close a  
10 couple  
11 gaps. When you were out at the jetty and when you  
12 witnessed it, do you remember where the Coast Guard  
13 vessel was at that time and what it was doing?

14 MR. BROWN: Yes. The 47-footer was  
15 still  
16 inside where the tower. Okay. He was still inside  
17 and, you know, I've watched them -- I've watched  
18 them  
19 work in all kinds of surf there and I've been at  
20 this  
21 for 38 years here and I've seen -- seen all -- all  
22 of  
23 the boats practice in that and that was actually  
24 some  
25 stuff that they didn't even want to practice in. I

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1 mean, it was ugly. It was --

2 MR. JONES: So --

3 MR. BROWN: It was ugly stuff.

4 MR. JONES: Yes.

5 MR. BROWN: And -- and I -- I don't  
6 know

7 whether there was a hesitation or -- or what it  
8 was,

9 but it took them awhile to get around the corner.

10 And

11 then once it got around the corner, there was

12 nothing

13 they could do. I mean, they -- I mean, there was

14 nothing. I mean, you'd have had the helicopter

15 right

16 there right now at that very moment to -- to save

17 anymore than -- than were saved, I think.

18 MR. JONES: Yes. So from your

19 perspective, when the Taki-Tooo did roll it was too

20 far in the breakers and too far inside and shallow

21 for

22 the Coast Guard to get in there?

23 MR. BROWN: Yes. And -- and actually

24 later on as they were trying, they were trying to

25 get

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1 in there. As soon as they got outside, they --  
2 they  
3 tried as much as they could to get in as close as  
4 they  
5 could, but -- and -- and by that time, the -- the  
6 second -- the second 47 was out there also.

7 MR. JONES: Right.

8 MR. BROWN: And they -- they were a  
9 little  
10 -- a little bit north. This was probably maybe 15  
11 minutes later or so. Bodies were already coming up  
12 on  
13 the beach.

14 MR. JONES: Right.

15 MR. BROWN: People were coming upon the  
16 beach. And one of the 47s got in trouble north.  
17 You  
18 know, he got in too shallow where he was actually  
19 bumping the bottom and I -- I turned to my wife and  
20 I  
21 said, "I -- I don't know if they're going to make  
22 it  
23 now." I don't know -- we were putting blankets on  
24 some guys or something and I said, "It looks like  
25 we

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1 might have a 47-footer up on the beach too." But  
2 they  
3 got out of it. They worked their way out of it and  
4 got back out. But it -- it was -- and I don't know  
5 how that even went into their report or if it did.

6 MR. JONES: Yes.

7 MR. BROWN: But it was -- it was a  
8 perilous time for them too.

9 MR. JONES: Sure.

10 MR. BROWN: I mean, they were -- they  
11 were  
12 trying to rescue lives. They were -- I know it was  
13 kind of a panicky situation out there too, so -- in  
14 --  
15 in some water I wouldn't want to be in.

16 MR. JONES: Right. And just in your  
17 estimation, when the Taki-Tooo rolled, the  
18 47-footer  
19 was at the tower or was out further towards the  
20 tips?

21 MR. BROWN: It -- it was between the  
22 tower  
23 and the tips. Okay?

24 MR. JONES: About half way?

25 MR. BROWN: I don't -- I don't know.

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1 But

2 in that -- in that general vicinity. You know, I

3 --

4 I wasn't really --

5 MR. JONES: Right.

6 MR. BROWN: -- looking that way. But I

7 --

8 I knew he was there. I knew he was patrolling that

9 area right there between the tower and the tips.

10 MR. JONES: Yes. Okay.

11 MR. BROWN: So --

12 MR. JONES: Well, that's about it, sir,

13 and that kind of confirms with what they said, that

14 little delay, they said was just -- you know, they

15 were for their moment to get out across it too.

16 MR. BROWN: Absolutely. They're -- I

17 mean, as -- as far as I'm concerned, they got out

18 there as fast as they possibly could safely, you

19 know,

20 because we -- they could have rolled just as easy

21 as

22 anything else. Forty-seven-foot isn't very big

23 either, not in that kind of an ocean.

24 MR. JONES: Yes. Well, it sounds like

25 you

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1 have a good practice on your end.

2 MR. BROWN: Yes. We -- we're planning  
3 on  
4 being in the business for a while longer, you know.  
5 It's just -- fishing's supposed to be fun and if  
6 it's  
7 -- if it's that dangerous, we just -- well, there  
8 --  
9 there have been lots of time, you know, we  
10 generally  
11 leave at 5:30 in the morning. Okay? That's our --  
12 our general going time, you know, and no matter  
13 what  
14 the tide's doing and on the mornings when we have  
15 like  
16 eight or nine, or 10-foot of run-out coming out of  
17 that bay and the ocean's a little choppy and a  
18 little  
19 bit of a swell on it, we just -- we'll wait. We'll  
20 wait until most of that water's gone and then look  
21 at  
22 it. And then maybe leave at 7:30 or 8:00. It --  
23 it's  
24 just part of -- part of knowing the business, I  
25 guess,

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1 and trying to be safe.

2 MR. JONES: Yes, local knowledge.  
3 That's  
4 big there at Tillamook.

5 MR. BROWN: Yes.

6 MR. JONES: Okay, Captain. Well, I  
7 appreciate your time.

8 MR. BROWN: You bet you.

9 MR. JONES: Sorry to take you away from  
10 loading --

11 MR. BROWN: No. No, they just put the  
12 new  
13 -- new washing machine in, so and I didn't have to  
14 do  
15 that.

16 MR. JONES: Okay.

17 MR. BROWN: Okay. Thank you.

18 MR. JONES: Thanks again.

19 MR. BROWN: Bye bye.

20 MR. JONES: Bye bye.

21 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded at 10:23  
22 a.m.)

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